

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY RANGOON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5187

INFO AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USLO PEKING

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L RANGOON 1218

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PEPR, BM, CH, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI AMBASSADOR CALLS ON GENERAL SAN YU--MORE

EVIDENCE OF BURMESE POLICY SHIFT AWAY FROM COURTSHIP OF
CHINA

REF: (A) RANGOON 977 (B) RANGOON 1191

1. ISRAELI AMBASSADOR SHMUEL OVNAT REQUESTED AND WAS GRANTED AN INTERVIEW APRIL 5 WITH GENERAL SAN YU, BURMA'S ACKNOWLEDGED "NUMBER TWO" LEADER, WHO IS SECRETARY OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE AND SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE RULING AND ONLY LEGAL POLITICAL PARTY, THE BURMA SOCIALIST PROGRAM PARTY (BSPP).

2. THE INTERVIEW WAS UNREMARKABLE, ACCORDING TO OVNAT, UNTIL HE BEGAN TO PRESS SAN YU ON THE TOPIC OF CHINESE SUPPORT FOR THE BURMA COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP) INSURGENTS, WHICH HAS BEEN A VERY SENSITIVE SUBJECT FOR BURMESE OFFICIALS AND ONE ON WHICH THEY HAVE BEEN RELUCTANT TO COMMENT. BECOMING CONSIDERABLY MORE VOLUBLE THAN HE HAD BEEN EARLIER IN THE DISCUSSION ("HE SEEMED TO WARM UP TO MY CHUTZPAH", OVNAT SAID), SAN YU STATED THAT
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THE GUB HAD THOUGHT PRC SUPPORT FOR THE BCP WAS INSTIGATED AND SUSTAINED BY THE FANG OF FOUR AND LIKE-MINDED CHINESE; WITH THE GANG'S DOWNFALL, IT THUS APPEARED TO THE GUB THAT THE TIME WAS PROPITIOUS TO SEEK A CHANGE IN THIS POLICY. HOWEVER, SAN YU CONTINUED, BURMESE EFFORTS TO THIS END WERE NOT SUCCESSFUL, AS HAS BEEN DEMONSTRATED BY THE TWO SUBSTANTIAL BCP OFFENSIVES SINCE LAST OCTOBER. OVNAT GAINED THE IMPRESSION THAT SAN YU WAS

DISTRESSED BY THE PRC'S REFUSAL TO MODIFY ITS STANCE ON SUPPORT FOR THE BCP.

3. THE OTHER SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT IN THE CONVERSATION WAS SAN YU'S EXPRESSION OF SEMINGLY GENUINE INTEREST IN OVNAT'S SUGGESTION OF THE POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING CLOSER LINKS BETWEEN THE BSPP AND THE LISRAELI LABOR PARTY. OVNAT SAID HE PLANS TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON THIS IN TEL AVIV AND TRY TO DEVELOP SOME CONCRETE PROPOSALS.

4. COMMENT IT IS RARE FOR SAN YU TO RECEIVE ANY FOREIGN AMBASSADOR, EXCEPT FR THOSE FROM COMMUNIST COUNTRIES WITH WHOSE RULING PARTIES THE BSPP HAS "FRATERNAL" SOCIALIST RELATIONS. MOREOVER, WHILE MAINTAINING A REASONABLE DEGREE OF NEUTRALITY, IN RECENT YEARS BURMA HAS TILTED TOWARD THE ARAB SIDE IN THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT, EVEN AGREEING IN PRINCIPLE LAST YEAR TO THE OPENING OF A PLO OFFICE IN RANGOON (AN AGREEMENT THUS FAR NOT IMPLEMENTED). THEREFORE, IT IS SURPRISING THAT SAN YU MET WITH OVNAT AT ALL, AND MORE SO THAT HE EXPRESSED INTEREST IN THE POSSIBILITY OF CLOSER BSPP-ISRAELI LABOR PARTY RELATIONS.

5. AS REPORTED IN REF A, WE HAVE HAD PREVIOUS INDICATIONS THAT GUB LEADERS HAVE RECOGNIZED THE FAILURE OF THEIR EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT A CHANGE IN PEKING'S POLICY ON SUPPORT FOR THE BCP BY BEING NICE TO THE CHINESE; THAT THEY ARE MORE THAN A LITTLE ANGRY AT THE PRC; AND THAT THEY ARE NOW IN THE PROCESS OF

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SHIFTING BURMA'S FOREIGN POLICY AWAY FROM COURTSHIP OF CHINA AND TOWARD MORE FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH NON-COMMUNIST COUNTRIES OF ASIA AND THE U.S. SAN YU'S COMMENTS TO OVNAT ARE CERTAINLY CONSISTENT WITH THIS SCENARIO, AS IN THE UNEXPECTED GUB REQUEST FOR HELICOPTER INSTRUCTOR PILOT TRAINING AT FORT RUCKER (REF B).
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